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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/2017

TAGS: PGOV MASS NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AFRICOM LEADERSHIP VISIT ABUJA

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 28-29, Ambassador Mary Carlin Yates and Vice Admiral Robert Moeller visited Abuja to discuss AFRICOM with Nigerian government officials, ECOWAS Commission President Chambas, Gulf of Guinea Energy Security Strategy (GGESS) member representatives, and members of the Nigerian press. Coming on the heels of the GON's pronouncement that AFRICOM was welcome neither on Nigerian soil nor in any other part of West Africa, the visit was a timely outreach to both key decision-makers and the public.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Yates and Vice Admiral Moeller visited Chief of Defense Staff Owoye Azazi, National Security Adviser Abdullahi Mukhtar, ECOWAS Commission President Mohammed Ibn Chambas, and Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe. They also spoke to members of the Nigerian and international press, and lunched with GGESS reps. In all venues, Ambassador Yates and Vice Admiral Moeller emphasized that AFRICOM enhances USG military activity in Africa, respects the opinion of both regional and national entities, is not a militarization of U.S. diplomacy, and poses no threat to the sovereignty of any nation. Responses from both our Nigerian and ECOWAS interlocutors were surprisingly consistent, and for the most part varied only in the intensity with which they were stated. Each bemoaned the belated U.S. effort to inform African nations and regional groupings of AFRICOM's purpose and make-up, expressed relief that AFRICOM was not about bases or colonialism, and warily agreed that AFRICOM could benefit the continent. The lasting impression, however, with the exception of NSA Mukhtar, was that each seemed to feel a sense of relief and satisfaction that senior Africom leadership had "finally" come to Abuja personally. As FM Maduekwe said, "Ah, now I have heard it straight from the horse's mouth."

¶3. (C) Subsequent press coverage accurately captured the principals' salient points. Editorial comment, however, was decidedly against AFRICOM and the GON garnered applause for the opposition to the new command.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Much of Nigerian criticism of AFRICOM seems to be rooted simply in the fact that Nigerians were not consulted prior to its creation; stated concerns about sovereignty, oil security, and a new Cold War may largely be posturing. This visit appears to some degree to have mollified wounded egos, and while the GON's negative,

widely-publicized pronouncements have been too loud to enable much of a public retraction of their stated positions, Post believes we will begin to see subtle signs of a softened position. To wit, we have heard of the November 30 creation of an "Interministerial Committee on AFRICOM," described to us as a direct result of the visit. Post will continue to monitor the evolving Nigerian position on the subject. END COMMENT.

15. (U) Vice Admiral Moeller's and Ambassador Yates' staff have cleared this message.

SANDERS